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INTRODUCING THE SHEN-YANG CHEMICAL WORKS

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INTRODUCING THE SHEN-YANG CHEMICAL WORKS. (PRECIS)

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Set up because during the war the Japanese found difficulty in transporting the chemicals they produced in Japan across to Manchuria. Main sections were: electrolytic plant, repair shops, oil manufacturing plant, and laboratories, the first and third of these being the most important. Hydrochloric acid, saltpetre, bleaching powder, liquid chlorine and other chemicals, oil for use in gas cylinders of combustion engines on locomotives, hardening oils for soap-making, etc, were produced. Employees reached a total of 1890 during the puppet regime in Manchuria, and output gradually increased from 1942 to '44 e.g. saltpetre, from 746 to 1298 tons; bleaching powder, from 778 to 1340 tons; HCL from 470 to 1175 tons.

Being protected by the USSR Red Army the Works suffered damage only after the KMT took over when the whold plant was idle for a year.

After liberation, restoration of the Works was gone on with, though the staff of employees went down to 47, only 8 of whom were skilled hands. But zeal for work grew with greater political awareness, so that workmen kept going without taking proper rest, spreading their enthusiasm to others, and one section after another was brought back into production. E.g. a team of some 20 or so men in the electrical room repaired a transformer which had been thrown away years before as beyond repair and increased its power by one-third, finding parts to replace those which were missing by searching on waste ground and in air-raid shelters.

The output of bleaching powder, hydrochloric acid and saltpetre, up to the end of April of this year, is already in excess of what it was under the Japanese puppets or the KMT. The April figures were: bleaching powder, 135 tons; saltpetre, 141 tons; HCL, 193 tons. The quality is better, too, e.g. bleaching powder, formerly 18 to 20%, now 37.2%; saltpetre, formerly 84%, now 89.1%.

The largest soap factory of the NE is under the control of these Works. It is capable of producing 1000 tons monthly. It is now repaired, using hardening oils in place of beef fat, and should recommence production by the end of July.

SUCCESS OF EXPERIMENTAL BURNING OF SPONGY IRON.(PRECIS)

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Two burnings of spongy iron have been made by workmen who had no technical assistance, an achievement rewarded at a congratulatory meeting of the PEN-CH'I Coal and Iron Company. The Spongy-iron, Works form part of the Iron Foundry: under the KMT it was managed by the military and the old workers could only get odd jobs. In Feb. of this year the administration appointed two watchmen WANG KUEI CH'ING and LIU TE FU, who had been connected with the Spongy-iron Works for more than 10 years, back to this section, much to their delight.

The article proceeds to detail the treatment meted out to the reducing furnaces by the KMT soldiers, and then of how these two workmen, with the help of others, got them into working order, looking for trolleys, rails, iron plates, etc. and finding them on the surrounding hills, recovering crucibles from the homes of the neighbours who were using them for pickling vegetables, and so on. The spongy-iron was needed to improve the quality of steel required for special uses, and in the absence of skilled instructors the two workmen mentioned were willing to attempt a burning, having kept eyes and ears open during the days of Japanese control. Wang had once stolen a look at a list of the materials used in its manufacture, and remembered it. He attended to this part of it, others to the charging of the crucibles, others to the burning, which needed great care, as a temperature of 1000° needed to be maintained for 35 hours; it too high, molten iron would be produced, if too low, lumps of mineral. Before the operation commenced there was a general consultation to remind everyone that the place, the materials, the products were now their own, and that failure in the burning would mean a waste of much lime, powdered coke and iron, and coal and a loss to the country. LIU looked after the fire day and night, and WANG took an hourly record of the temperature. When the time came after ten days to open the kiln and remove the crucibles everyone was tense to find how it had gone; when first the purpleyred glow of the crucibles and then the flashing blue colour of the reduced spongy-iron were seen it was realised that the attempt had been successful. This was confirmed when the superintendent by quanititative chemical analysis compared the resulting product with what had been produced in former days.

This success means that this ingredient of special steel is now available, and a tremendous contribution made to the support of the front line with small arms, artillery, and cartridge cases.

KO SHANG CHOU, A MODEL WORKER

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Tells how this man, in the SHEN-YANG Chemical Industry Works, found home and happiness in the Communist Party. On hearing the call to restore production he gave himself to finding what was needed among the discarded and broken remnants of the former plant, and searched in the ruined air-raid shelters and on the dumps of waste iron for usable materials. The bleaching powder section was fitted out in a week.

Finding a stoppage in the chlorine pipes when a trial was being made, he inserted his hand to remove it and was gassed by a sudden release of the chlorine. This necessitated a period of convalescence during which he was deeply affected by visits made by the Works Superintendent and the Union President. Before he was properly recovered he resumed work in the hydrochlorid acid section: here the very important silica pipes used for leading the chlorine gas were broken. They had previously come from Germany, and the KMT had carried off the good ones, but Ko did not let these difficulties deter him. He thought continually about the matter and ultimately stuck the broken pieces of piping together with a mixture of chickens' feathers and powdered glass, binding them round with asbestos cord. On testing, this proved successful, and what is more, the problem of leakage which constantly occurred during KMT times was solved!

Formerly explosions continually took place owing to the fact that the chlorine and hydrogen gases could not be kept in a fixed proportion: as a result of the study given to this matter by Ko, the gas disposal jets were made to function again so that the excess hydrogen could be removed and a long life for the pipes be ensured. It was thus that the hydrochloric acid section was functioning again within a week.